A Letter sent by Columbus to [Luis de Santangel] Chancellor of the Exchequer [of Aragon], respecting the Islands found in the Indies, enclosing another for their Highnesses.

Sir,—Believing that you will take pleasure in hearing of the great success which our Lord has granted me in my voyage, I write you this letter, whereby you will learn how in thirty-three days' time I reached the Indies with the fleet which the most illustrious King and Queen, our Sovereigns, gave to me, where I found very many islands thickly peopled, of all which I took possession without resistance, for

Esta Carta embió Colon al Escrivano de Racion de las Islas halladas en las Indias. Contenida la otra de Sus Altezas.

Señor, por que se que aureis3 plazer de la grand victoria que nuestro señor me ha dado en mi vyaia, vos escriuo esta por la qual sabreys como en xxxij dice pase a las judias4 con la armada que los illustrissimos Rey et reyna, nuestros señores, me dieron, donde yo falle muy muchas Islas pobladas con gente syn numero. Y delias todas he tomado possession por sus altzas con pregon y

1 The original spelling of the Ambrosian text, with all its faults, is here preserved, with the exception of the separation of words fused together, and the addition of punctuation and capitals for the sake of clearness. Suggested corrections from the other texts will be placed at the foot of each page, V. standing for Valencian text; S. for Simancas text; I. for Italian text; L. for Latin; D. for Dati. Such mispellings as a Spanish scholar will readily recognize as the blunders of the Spanish printer I have not thought it necessary to notice.

2 From the 8th of September when Columbus sailed from the Canaries, to the 11th of October when he first saw land, was thirty-three days.

3 Habreis. 4 V. “pasó de las Islas de Canaria a las Indias.”
their Highnesses by proclamation made and with the royal standard unfurled. To the first island that I found I gave the name of San Salvador, in remembrance of His High Majesty, who hath marvellously brought all these things to pass; the Indians call it Guanaham. To the second island I gave the name of Santa-Maria de Concepcion; the third I called Fernandina; the fourth, Isabella; the fifth, Juana; and so to each one I gave a new name. When I reached Juana, I followed its coast to the westward, and found it so large that I thought it must be the mainland,—the province of Cathay; and, as I found neither towns nor villages on the sea-coast, but only a few hamlets, with the inhabitants, of which I could not hold conversation, because they all immediately fled, I kept on the same route, thinking that I could not fail to light upon some large cities and towns. At length, after the proceeding of many leagues, and finding that nothing new presented itself, and that the coast was leading northwards (which I wished to avoid, because winter had already set in, and it was my intention to move southwards; and because moreover the winds were contrary), I resolved not to wait for a change in the weather, but returned to a certain harbour which I had remarked, and from which I sent two men ashore to ascertain whether there was any king or large cities in that part. They journeyed for three days and found countless small hamlets with numberless inhabitants, but with nothing like order; they therefore returned. In the meantime I had learned from some other Indians whom I had seized, that this land was certainly an island; accordingly, I followed the coast eastward for a distance of one hundred and seven leagues, where it ended in a cape. From this cape, I saw another island to the eastward at a distance of eighteen leagues from the former, to which I gave the name of La Española. Thither I went, tenia proposito de hazer del al anstro y tambien el viento me dio adelante, determine de no aguardar otro tiempo, y bolui atras fusta unzellado puerto da donde enbe dos hombres por la tierra para saber si nuia rey o grandes ciudades. Andouieron tres jornadas and hallaron infinitas poblaciones pequeñas y gente sin numero, mas no cosa de regimen, por lo qual se boluirieron. Yo entendia harta de otros jndios que ya tenia tomados como continuamente esta tierra era isla, et asi segui la costa della al oriente ciento y siete legues faste donde fazia fin: del qual cabo vi otra isla al oriente, distincta de esta diez o ocho leguas, a la qual luego puse nombre la Española, y fui alli y segui la parte del setentrion asi conmio de la Juana al oriente, dixviiia grandes leguas por linia recta del

1 Watling's Island. 2 Long Island. 3 Great Exuma. 4 Saometo or Crooked Island. 5 Cuba.

8. So in all the texts. Señor de Varnhagen suggests "hacerme." 7 V. "ahí." 6 V. "dado." 5 V. "había otra isla;" L. "alim insulam prospexi." 4 V. "había otra isla;" L. "había otra isla;" S. "ciento y ochenta ocho leguas." 3 V. "ciento ochenta y ocho." 2 V. "ciento ochenta y ocho." 1 V. "ciento ochenta y ocho."
and followed its northern coast to the eastward (just as had done with the coast of Juana), one hundred and seventy-eight full leagues due east. This island, like all the others, is extraordinarily large, and this one extremely so. In it are many seaports with which none that I know in Christendom can bear comparison, so good and capacious that it is wonder to see. The lands are high, and there are many very lofty mountains with which the island of Cetefrey cannot be compared. They are all most beautiful, of a thousand different shapes, accessible, and covered with trees of a thousand kinds of such great height that they seemed to reach the skies. I am told that the trees never lose their foliage, and I can well understand it, for I observed that they were as green and luxuriant as in Spain in the month of May. Some were in bloom, others bearing fruit, and others otherwise according to their nature. The nightingale was singing as well as other birds of a thousand different kinds; and that, in November, the month in which I myself was roaming amongst them. There are palm-trees of six or eight

oriento así como de la Juana, la cual y todas las otras son fortísimas\(^1\) en demasia grado, y esta en estremo; en ella ay muchos puertos en la costa del mar, sin comparación de otros que yo sepa en christianos, y sartos, y buenos, y grandes, que es maravilla. Las tierras della son altas y en ella muy muchas sierras y montañas altísimas sin comparación de ysla de cente.\(^2\) Son todas fermosísimas de mill, fachuras y todas andables y llenas de arboles de mil maneras y altas y parecen que llegan al cielo; y tengo por dicho que jamás pierden la foia, segun lo puede comprender que los vi tan verdes y tan hermosos como son por Mayo en Spain, y dellos stavam floridos, dellos con fruto, y dellos en otro término según es su calidad; y cantan el ruiseñor\(^3\) y otros pajaros\(^4\) de mil maneras en el mes de noviembre por allí donde yo andaba. Ay

kinds, wonderful in their beautiful variety; but this is the case with all the other trees and fruits and grasses; trees, plants, or fruits filled us with admiration. It contains extraordinary pine groves, and very extensive plains. There is also honey, a great variety of birds, and many different kind of fruits. In the interior there are many mines of metals and a population innumerable. Española is a wonder. Its mountains and plains, and meadows, and fields, are so beautiful and rich for planting and sowing, and rearing cattle of all kinds, and for building towns and villages. The harbours on the coast, and the number and size and wholesomeness of the rivers, most of them bearing gold, surpass anything that would be believed by one who had not seen them. There is a great difference between the trees, fruits, and plants of this island and those of Juana. In this island there are many spices and extensive mines of gold and other metals. The inhabitants of this and of all the other islands I have found or gained intelligence of, both men and women, go as naked as they were born, with the

palmas de seys\(^5\) o de ocho maneras, que es admiracion verlas por la disformidad fermosa dellas; mas asi como los otros arboles y frutos et yeras. En ella ay pinares a maraula, e ay campas grandísimas et ay muel, y de muchas maneras, de ayes y frutas muy diversas. En las tierras ay muchas minas de metales et ay gente inestimable numero. La española es maravilla; las sierras y las montañas y las negras et las campas y las tierras tan fermosas y grases para plantar et sembrar, para criar ganados de todas suertes para hedificios de villas y lugares. Los puertos de la mar aqui no hauria creancia sin vista, et delos rios muchos y grandes y buenas aguas, los mas delos quales traen oro. En los arboles et frutos et yeras ay grandes diferencias de aquellas del Juana. En esta ay muchas especieras\(^6\) y grandes minas de oro et otros metales. La gente desta isla et de todas las otras que he fallado y hauido,\(^7\) in aya hauido noticia, andan todos desnudos, hombres et mugeres, asi

\(^1\) It should be 188 leagues. See Bibliographical Notice.
\(^2\) V. "fertísimas." S. "fortísimas." I. "ferálisísimas."
\(^4\) V. and S. "ruiseñor." \(^5\) V. and S. "pajaros."
\(^6\) V. and S. "especieras." \(^7\) V. and S. "y ha hauido. I. "ho travado ho inteso."
exception that some of the women cover one part only with a single leaf of grass or with a piece of cotton, made for that purpose. They have neither iron, nor steel, nor arms, nor are they competent to use them, not that they are not well-formed and of handsome stature, but because they are timid to a surprising degree.) Their only arms are reeds cut in the seeding time, to which they fasten small sharpened sticks, and even these they dare not use; for on several occasions it has happened that I have sent ashore two or three men to some village to hold a parley, and the people have come out in countless numbers, but, as soon as they saw our men approach, would flee with such precipitancy that a father would not even stop to protect his son; and this not because any harm had been done to any of them, for, from the first, wherever I went and got speech with them, I gave them of all that I had, such as cloth and many other things, without receiving anything in return, but they are, as I have described, incurably timid. It is true that when they are reassured and have thrown off this fear, they are guileless, and so liberal of all they have that no one would believe it who had not seen it. They never refuse anything that they possess when it is asked of them; on the contrary, they offer it themselves, and they exhibit so much loving kindness that they would even give their hearts; and, whether it be something of value or of little worth that is offered to them, they are satisfied. I forbade that worthless things, such as pieces of broken porringers and broken glass, and ends of straps, should be given to them; although, when they succeeded in obtaining them, they thought they possessed the finest jewel in the world. It was ascertained that a sailor received for a leather strap a piece of gold weighing two castellanos and a half, and others received for other objects of far less value, much more. For new blancas they would give all that they had, whether it was two or three castellanos in gold or one or two arrobas of spun cotton. They took even bits of the broken hoops of the wine barrels,
and gave, like fools, all that they possessed in exchange, inasmuch that I thought it was wrong, and forbade it. I gave away a thousand good and pretty articles which I had brought with me in order to win their affection; and that they might be led to become Christians, and be well inclined to love and serve their Highnesses and the whole Spanish nation, and that they might aid us by giving us things of which we stand in need, but which they possess in abundance. They are not acquainted with any kind of worship, and are not idolaters; but believe that all power and, indeed, all good things are in heaven; and they are firmly convinced that I, with my vessels and crews, came from heaven, and with this belief received me at every place at which I touched, after they had overcome their apprehension. And this does not spring from ignorance, for they are very intelligent, and navigate all these seas, and relate everything to us, so that it is astonishing what a good account they are able to give of everything; but they have never seen men with clothes on, nor vessels like ours. (On my reaching the Indies,

Fasta los pedazos delos arcos rotos de las pipas tomaran y danan lo que tenian como bestias, ast que me parecia mal. Yo lo defendi y dana yo graciosas mil cosas buenas que yo leuana, por que tomen amor y allenda desto se faran cristianos, que se jucian al amor y servicio de sus altezas y de toda la nation castellana, y procuran de anuiar a nos dar las cosas que tienen en abundancia que nos son necessarias. Y no conocien ninguna sela nin yodolatris, salvo que todos creen que las fueros y el bien es en el cielo. Y creyan muy firme que yo con estos nauies y gente venia del cielo, y en tal catamiento me recibian in todo cabo antes de aper perdido el miedo. Y esto no precede porque sean ygnorantes, salvo de muy soli ingenio y hombres que nauegan todas aquellas mares, que es maranilla la buena cuenta aquellos dan de todo, salvo porque nunca vieron gente vestida ny semejantes nauies. Y luego que llegue a las indias en la primera ysla que halle, tome por fuerza algunos dellos para que depren-

1 V. "façan."  2 V. and S. "ayudar."  3 V. and S. "reciben."
navigate among these islands, which are innumerable, and carry on their traffic. I have seen in some of these canoes seventy and eighty men, each with his oar. In all these islands I did not notice much difference in the appearance of the inhabitants, nor in their manners nor language, except that they all understand each other, which is very singular, and leads me to hope that their Highnesses will take means for their conversion to our holy faith, towards which they are very well disposed. I have already said how I had gone one hundred and seven leagues in following the sea-coast of Juana in a straight line from west to east; and from that survey I can state that the island is larger than England and Scotland together, because, beyond these one hundred and seven leagues, there lie to the west two provinces which I have not yet visited, one of which is called Acran, where the people are born with a tail. These two provinces cannot be less in length than from fifty to sixty leagues, from what can be learned from the Indians that I have with me, and who are acquainted with all these islands. The other, 

 Española, has a greater circumference than all Spain, from Catalonia by the sea-coast to Fuenterabia in Biscay, since on one of its four sides I made one hundred and eighty-eight great leages in a straight line from west to east. This is something to covet, and when found not to be lost sight of. Although I have taken possession of all these islands in the name of their Highnesses, and they are all more abundant in wealth than I am able to express; and although I hold them all for their Highnesses, so that they can dispose of them quite as absolutely as they can of the kingdoms of Castile, yet there was one large town in Española of which especially I took possession, situated in a locality well adapted for the working of the gold mines, and for all kinds of commerce, either with the main land on this side, or with that beyond which is the land of the great Khan, with which there will be vast commerce and great profit. To that city I gave the name of Villa de Navidad, and fortified it with a

yslas. Esta otra española en cierco tiene mas que la españa toda desde colunyá por costa de mar fasta fuente rauia en vi scaya pues en vna quadra andune clxxxvij. grandes leguas por recta línea de occidente a oriente. Esta es para desear, et vista, es para nunca dexar; enla qual puesto que de todas tenga tomada posse­sion por sus altezas, y todas sean mas abastadas de lo que yo se y puedo dexar, y todas las tengo por de sus altezas qual dellas pueden dispor como y tan complidamente como delos Reynos de castilla. En esta española en el lugar mas conuenible y mejor comarca para las minas del oro y de todo trato, asi dola tierra firme de aqua commo de aquella de alla del grand can, adonde anra grand trato et grand gana na, he tomado possession de vna villa grande, ala qual puse nombre la villa de Navidad. Y en ella he fecho fuerza y fortaleza que ya a estas horas estara del
seems to me that the men are content with one wife, except their chief or king, to whom they give twenty. The women seem to me to work more than the men. I have not been able to learn whether they have any property of their own. It seemed to me that what one possessed belonged to all, especially in the matter of eatables. I have not found in those islands any monsters, as many imagined; but, on the contrary, the whole race is very well-formed, nor are they black, as in Guinea, but their hair is flowing, for they do not dwell in that part where the force of the sun’s rays is too powerful. It is true that the sun has very great power there, for the country is distant only twenty-six degrees from the equinoctial line. In the islands where there are high mountains, the cold this winter was very great, but they endure it, not only from being habituated to it, but by eating meat with a variety of excessively hot spices. As to savages, I did not even hear of any, except at an island which lies the

1 There appears to be a doubt as to the exact number of men left by Columbus at Española, different accounts variously giving it as thirty-seven, thirty-eight, thirty-nine, and forty. There is, however, a list of their names included in one of the diplomatic documents printed in Navarrete’s work, which makes the number amount to forty, independent of the governor Diego de Arana, and his two lieutenants Pedro Gutierrez and Rodrigo de Escobedo. All these men were Spaniards, with the exception of two; one an Irishman named William Ires, a native of Galway, and one an Englishman, whose name was given as Tallarte de Lages, but whose native designation it is difficult to guess at. The document in question, was a proclamation to the effect that the heirs of those men should, on presenting at the office of public business at Seville, sufficient proof of their being the next of kin, receive payment in conformity with the royal order to that purpose, issued at Burgos, on the twentieth of December, 1507.

1 V. and S. “correcciones.”
2 V. and S. “espeto.”
3 V. and S. “espeto.”
4 Navarrete says that in old Spanish “espeto” meant a “spit.”
5 V. and S. “distantes.”
6 V. and S. “ahi tenia fuerza.”
7 V. and S. “como son.”
8 L. “quibus vestuntur.”
9 V. and S. “ni noticia.”
10 V. “Isola de Quarives.”
11 L. “insula Charis nuncupata.”
second in one's way in coming to the Indies. It is inhabited by a race which is regarded throughout these islands as extremely ferocious, and eaters of human flesh. These possess many canoes, in which they visit all the Indian islands, and rob and plunder whatever they can. They are no worse formed than the rest, except that they are in the habit of wearing their hair long, like women, and use bows and arrows made of reeds, with a small stick at the end, for want of iron, which they do not possess. They are ferocious amongst these exceedingly timid people; but I think no more of them than of the rest. These are they which have intercourse with the women of Matenino, the first labour suitable to their sex; but use bows and arrows made there are no men. These women employ themselves in no yslas no tionen. Son feroses y se arman y cobijan con de reeds like those above described, and arm and cover themselves with plates of of iron, which they do not possess. They are extremely ferocious, and eaters of human flesh. These possess many canoes, in which they visit all the Indian islands, and in which the inhabitants have no hair. En esta ay oro sin cuenta, y desta y de las otras trago comigo indios para testimoniio. Y concluision a hablar desto solamente que sea hecho este viage, que fue si de corrida que pueden ver sus altzaes que yo les dare oro quanto ovieren menester con muy poquita ayuda que sus altzaes me danan, agora especieria y algodon quanto sus altzaes mandaran cargar, y almastica quanta mandaran cargar, et dela qual faltaza ay se ha fallado, salvo en grecia ena ysla de xio, y el sefiorio la venden como quierio, y lignuola quanto mandaran cargar, et esclavos quanto mandaran cargar et seran delos ydolates. Y creo auer hallado rubarbo y canela y otras mil cosas de sustancia fallare, que auan fallado la gente que yo alla dexo, por que yo no me ha detenido ningun cabo, en quanto el viento me auy dado lugar de

1 Dominica. 2 Martinique. 3 V. and S. “viva.” L. “humana.” 4 V. “que tomaban las mugeres de Matinino.” S. “que trocaban las mugeres de matrimonio.” L. “qui coeunt cum quibusdam feminis que insulam Mateninum habitant.” D. “isola decta Matanino.”

great quantity. They assure me that there is another island larger than Española, in which the inhabitants have no hair. It is extremely rich in gold; and I bring with me Indians taken from these different islands, who will testify to all these things. Finally, and speaking only of what has taken place in this voyage, which has been so hasty, their Highnesses may see that I shall give them all the gold they require, if they will give me but a very little assistance; spices also, and cotton, as much as their Highnesses shall command to be shipped; lign aloes, as much as their Highnesses shall command to be shipped; slaves, as many of these idolators as their Highnesses shall command to be shipped. I think also I have found rhubarb and cinnamon, and I shall find a thousand other valuable things by means of the men that I have left behind me, for I tarried at no point so long personas no tienen ningun cabello. En esta ay o sin cuenta, y desta y de las otras trago comigo indios para testimoniio. Y concluision a hablar desto solamente que sea hecho este viage, que fue si de corrida que pueden ver sus altzaes que yo les dare oro quanto ovieren menester con muy poquita ayuda que sus altzaes me danan, agora especieria y algodon quanto sus altzaes mandaran cargar, y almastica quanta mandaran cargar, et dela qual faltaza ay se ha fallado, salvo en grecia ena ysla de xio, y el sefiorio la venden como quierio, y lignuola quanto mandaran cargar, et esclavos quanto mandaran cargar et seran delos ydolates. Y creo auer hallado rubarbo y canela y otras mil cosas de sustancia fallare, que auan fallado la gente que yo alla dexo, por que yo no me ha detenido ningun cabo, en quanto el viento me auy dado lugar de

First Voyage of Columbus.

Of Genoa. The island of Chios belonged to the Genoese Republic from 1346 to 1566.

V. and S. “hobieren.”

In the corrupt edition of the Latin translation reprinted by Navarrete from the España Illustrada, this word is rendered “hydrophila­torum.”
as the wind allowed me to proceed, except in the town of Navidad, where I took the necessary precautions for the security and settlement of the men I left there. Much more I would have done if my vessels had been in as good a condition as by rights they ought to have been. This is much, and praised be the eternal God, our Lord, who gives to all those who walk in his ways victory over things which seem impossible; of which this is signally one, for, although others may have spoken or written concerning these countries, it was all mere conjecture, as no one could say that he had seen them—amounting only to this, that those who heard listened the more, and regarded the matter rather as a fable than anything else. But our Redeemer hath granted this victory to our illustrious King and Queen and their kingdoms, which have acquired great fame by an event of such high importance, in which all Christendom ought to rejoice, and which it ought to celebrate with great festivals and the offering of solemn thanks to the Holy Trinity with many solemn prayers, both for the great exaltation which

nanegar, solamente en la villa de Navidad en quanto doexasegurado et bien asentado; y ala verdad mucho mas ficiera si los nausos me sirvieran como razon demandana. Esto es harto1 y eterno dios nuestro sefior el qual da a todos aquellos que andan su camino victoria de cosas que parecen imposible: y esta señaladamente fue la vna; porque aunque estas tierras ayan fallado o escrito,2 todo va por constuctura sin allegar devista, salvo comprendiendo a tanto que los oyentes los mas escuchanan y juzganan mas por falsa que por poca3 cosa dello.

Asy que pues nuestro redentor dio victoria a nuestros illustissimos rey et reyna y a sus reynos famosos de tan alta cosa, adonde toda la christianidad deve tomar alegria y hacer grandes fiestas, y dar gracias solemnnes a la santa trinidad con muchas oraciones solemnnes por el tanto enxalzamiento que auran, en

1 V. and S. "cierto."
2 V. and S. "fablo otros." L. "scripserunt vel locuti sunt."
3 V. and S. "otra." L. "prope videhatur fabula."
nesses. In all the Indies I have always found the weather like that in the month of May. I reached them in thirty-three days, and returned in twenty-eight, with the exception that these storms detained me fourteen days knocking about in this sea. All seamen say that they have never seen such a severe winter nor so many vessels lost.

Done on the fourteenth day of March.

En todas las yndias he siempre hallado los temporales como en mayo. Adonde yo fui en xxxij. días y bolui en xxviiij. salvo estas tormentas me han detenido xiiij. días corriendo por esta mar. Dizen aqua todos los honbres dela mar que jamas ouo tan mal yuerno, no ni tantas perdidas de naues. Fecha a. xiij días de marco.

Esta carta embio Colon al escrivano Deracion delas Islas halladas en las Indias. Contenida a otra de sus Altezas.

1 S. “tiempoa.” 2 S. “noventa y tres.”
3 S. “setenta y ocho.” Both are wrong. It should be forty-eight, from January 16 to March 4.
4 S. “trece.”
5 S. “los quatro.” Columbus really arrived at Lisbon on the 4th of March. For an explanation of this discrepancy, see Biographical Notice.

6 S. “Indias e otra.”